



SALLY!

HIGHER EDUCATION MODULE

Teach and Tell Feminist History

The documentary *Sally!* was born from a simple question:

**“How come you’ve never heard
of Sally Gearhart?”**

Now, these film-based modules extend that inquiry to undergraduate and graduate students, inspiring additional research, inviting critical thinking, and actively seeking to redress the historical omission of women and LGBTQ+ individuals from academic discourse.

Through the *Sally!* Modules for Higher Education, students in Gender Studies, Women Studies, LGBTQ+ Studies, Sociology, Political Science, Theology, Education, and more can engage and learn about the life and legacy of one of second-wave feminism’s* most cherished leaders through her voice and the testimonials and stories from her beloved community of colleagues and friends.



*** Second-wave feminism (1960s-1980s) fought for women’s issues, including preventing domestic violence, advancing racial justice, protecting reproductive rights, ensuring LGBTQ rights, gaining pay equality, and more.**

(Source: [National Women’s History Museum](#))



“TEACH AND TELL FEMINIST HISTORY” MODULE

“Being able to tell our story was beyond anything I knew because I had been silenced. And I think a lot of times, especially during that time, women felt isolated. And so, it took us out of that isolation and into a larger community of women who were struggling with the same issues.”

- Robin Song, Student of Sally's



The “Teach and Tell Feminist History” Module focuses on the intellectual revolution of the 1970s, specifically the birth of Women Studies Programs. It highlights how the classroom became a radical space for empowerment, consciousness-raising, and feminist education. Sally Gearhart and her colleagues at San Francisco State University were trailblazers, providing the vocabulary and framework for personal and political liberation.

By engaging in this interactive learning, students will explore:

- How did the creation of Women Studies Programs change students’ lives in the 1970s?
- What is the connection between academic theory (what is taught in class) and real-world activism?
- How did Sally Gearhart and her colleagues’ teaching style differ from the teaching in traditional male-centric academia?
- What does the phrase, “The personal is political,” mean in the context of Sally’s classroom?

Upon completion of the “Teach and Tell Feminist History” Module, students will:

- Understand the historical context that precipitated the creation of Women Studies.
- Analyze the concept of “consciousness-raising” as an educational tool.
- Evaluate how feminist pedagogy challenges traditional power structures in education.
- Reflect on the evolution of and challenges to gender studies from the 1970s to the present day.

TOPIC 1

The Classroom as a Space for Transformation

(Working Within Institutions)



QUESTIONS

- ? How does the political and social climate of a community influence the academic environment? How is that illustrated in the experience of Sally Gearhart?
- ? How do courses in a college catalogue legitimize these experiences for students (for example: “Women and Violence” or “Women and Lesbianism”)?
- ? In **Sally!** we hear that students were fighting for their lives, and this was in the 1970s. How does that compare to today? What is similar and what is different?
- ? What were the origins of lesbian separatism and the importance of women-only spaces in feminism?



Watch **Sally!** Clip 1
4 minutes

Description: This clip explores the evolution of Women Studies courses into the community, including separatism and women-only spaces.

Start: 0:54:21 (voiceover: “In 1976, there was the ‘Women in Violence’ Conference.”)

End: 0:57:50 (Song: “...work it on out.”)



TOPIC 2

“Treason in the Delivery Room”



QUESTIONS

- Sally’s lecture on “Treason in the delivery room” suggests that gender conditioning begins at birth. How does this idea resonate with you today?
- In *Sally!* students described the class as “thrilling” and said the world “broke open.” Describe a learning experience that fundamentally changed how you see and experience the world.
- How did the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of the participants in the Women Studies Program (Marxist, Separatist, Christian) contribute to the richness of the education and the department?

MODULE EXERCISE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE SYLLABUS

Students will compare the “radical” nature of the 1970s feminist education with the curriculum today.

Research: Look up the course catalog for a Gender or Womens Studies department at a college or university today.

Creation: Based on the film clips, reconstruct a hypothetical syllabus for Sally Gearhart’s 1974 “Rhetoric of Sexual Liberation” class. What topics would be covered and what would be left out? (for example, The Bible and Homosexuality, Gender Identity, Trans lives?)

Comparison: Create a Venn Diagram comparing the 1974 topics with the 2026 topics. What has changed? What issues have remained consistent? What would you call your course today?

FOCUS ON WOMEN

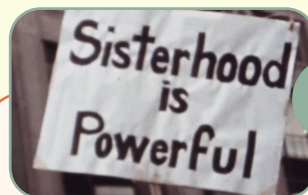


Watch *Sally!* Clip 2
4 minutes

Description: This clip details the founding of the Women Studies Program at San Francisco State University. There was no existing curriculum, so these women had to develop it from scratch and challenge patriarchal history.

Start: 0:46:35 (Pam Haskins: “Sally was the person who was often our spokeswoman...”)

End: 0:50:04 (Dorothy Haecker: “Sally’s course remained one of the most popular and transformative courses in the entire college curriculum.”)



Watch *Sally!* Clip 3
4 minutes

Description: Former students recall the emotional and intellectual impact of Sally’s lectures, specifically the realization of how society shapes and imprints gender roles, and how this education led to liberation and immediate bonding among the students.

Start: 0:50:10 (Corky Wick: “I started graduate school, I think I was in my 40s.”)

End: 0:54:20 (voiceover: “All of us had connections in the community.”)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Scholarly Articles

Byron, Grace. "Feminist Polemic Now!" *Lux*, no. 13, 2025. [Feminist Polemic Now! - Lux Magazine](#)

Faderman, Lillian. *Woman: The American History of an Idea*. Yale University Press, 2022.

Fahs, Breanne, editor. *Burn It Down! Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*. Verso, 2020.

Fahs, Breanne, editor. *Firebrand Feminism: The Radical Lives of Ti-Grace Atkinson, Kathie Sarachild, Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, and Dana Densmore*. University of Washington Press, 2018.

Frink, Brenda D. "Feminist Histories," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 3, 2024, pp. 327-331. <https://doi.org/10.1525/phr.2024.93.3.327>.

Shulman, Alix Kates and Honor Moore, editors. *Women's Liberation!: Feminist Writings That Inspired a Revolution and Still Can*. Library of America, 2021.

Schulman, Sarah. "What Does Feminism Mean to You?" *FEMINIST*, 22 May 2025. [A special interview with Sarah Schulman — Feminist](#)

Relevant Websites

Byron, Feminist Formations: [Feminist Formations](#)

National Women's Studies Association: [National Women's Studies Association](#)

San Francisco State University Department of Women and Gender Studies: [Department of Women & Gender Studies](#)

University of Oregon, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies: socialsciences.uoregon.edu/wgss



SALLY!

SallyGearhartFilm.com